



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
2 NAVY ANNEX
WASHINGTON, DC 20380-1775

IN REPLY REFER TO:

CMC-SD

11 FEB 2002

WHITE LETTER NO. 03-02

From: Commandant of the Marine Corps
To: All General Officers
All Commanding Officers
All Officers in Charge

Subj: MARINE CORPS FATALITIES

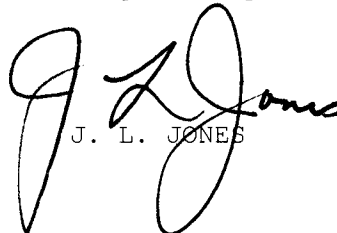
1. Fiscal Year 01 (FY 01) was a banner year in reducing the number of Marines killed in both "off duty" and "aviation" mishaps. Much of the credit for this goes to our small unit leadership and our understanding of the emerging importance of Operational Risk Management.

2. FY 02 is revealing itself to be a reversal of our FY 01 progress. With the possible exception of training mishaps, where we are doing somewhat better as compared to FY 01, we are not where we want to be. We need to improve.

3. In order to illustrate my personal concern for and commitment to the families of Marines who lose their lives, I am implementing the following policy changes. First, within five working days of a Marine becoming a fatality, regardless of circumstances, the first officer in the Marine's chain of command will forward to me a proposed condolence letter, for my signature, addressed to the Marine's next of kin. I intend, through this means, to communicate, in addition to local command efforts, the Marine Corps' profound sense of loss with regard to one of our Marines. The Director, Marine Corps Staff will publish submission procedures under separate correspondence. Secondly, I solicit your continued vigilance to ensure our death investigations and processes remain objective. In particular, pay close attention to our regulations (JAGMAN, Chapter 2 and LEGADMINMAN, Chapter 8) regarding who convenes and investigates death investigations. In general, organizations should not investigate themselves and juniors should not investigate seniors. No member of the organization involved in the incident shall be appointed to conduct the investigation without the concurrence of the next senior commander. Consult current regulations and your staff judge advocate for assistance in these matters.

4. My intent is to send a clear message to our Corps with regard to how we respond as a culture when Marines lose their lives, regardless of duty status. We did well in FY 01 and we will do better in FY 02.

5. I solicit your support in communicating the importance of this effort to all Marines.


J. L. JONES